Self-Esteem, Positive and Negative Experience, and Life Satisfaction in University Students

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Abstract

Background: The changes in a person's life from adolescence to adulthood are closely tied to the experience of college life. Students' levels of self-esteem, positive experiences, negative experiences, and life satisfaction are important topics for further study. **Objective:** This study aims to identify the correlation between self-esteem, positive experiences, negative experiences, and life satisfaction among university students. **Method**: The study involved 112 participants. Three scales were utilized: the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), the Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE), and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). Data analysis was conducted using Spearman's correlation technique. **Results**: T(1) There is a positive correlation between self-esteem and life satisfaction; (2) there is a positive correlation between positive experiences and life satisfaction; and (3) there is a negative correlation between negative experiences and life satisfaction. **Conclusion**: The results indicate a correlation between self-esteem, positive experiences, negative experiences, and life satisfaction among university students.

Keywords: Life satisfaction; negative experience; positive experience; self-esteem; university students

Abstrak

Latar Belakang: Perubahan kehidupan seseorang dari masa remaja menuju masa dewasa tidak terlepas dengan pengalaman kehidupan masa kuliah. Tingkat keberhargaan diri, pengalaman hidup positif, pengalaman negatif, serta kepuasan hidup mahasiswa dapat menjadi topik yang menarik untuk dikaji lebih dalam. **Tujuan:** Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui hubungan antara harga diri, pengalaman positif, pengalaman negatif, dan kepuasan hidup pada mahasiswa. **Metode**: Pada penelitian ini melibatkan 112 mahasiswa sebagai partisipan. Terdapat tiga skala yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini, yaitu The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE), dan Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). Analisis data menggunakan teknik korelasi Spearman. **Hasil**: (1) Terdapat korelasi positif antara harga diri dengan kepuasan hidup, (2) terdapat korelasi positif antara pengalaman positif dengan kepuasan hidup, dan (3) terdapat korelasi negatif antara pengalaman negatif dengan kepuasan hidup. **Simpulan**: Berdasarkan hasil penelitian dapat diketahui bahwa terdapat hubungan antara harga diri, pengalaman positif, pengalaman negatif, dan kepuasan hidup mahasiswa.

Keywords: Kepuasan hidup; pengalaman negatif; pengalaman positif; harga diri; mahasiswa

Introduction

While attending college, students have to complete early adulthood developmental tasks. Hurlock (2009) explained that the tasks of early adult development include starting work, holding responsibilities as part of society, and finding appropriate social groups. Students who are unable to fulfill their developmental tasks tend to feel dissatisfied with their lives. Life satisfaction can be defined as an evaluation of a person's quality of life based on criteria they set for themselves (Djaling & Purba, 2019). Criteria are formed based on life experiences and how one appreciates the life they have lived. A person will experience various important events that can change him during the transition of adolescence to adulthood. One of the important things in getting to maturity is a person's ability to assess his life satisfaction (Novianti & Alfiasari, 2017).

Life satisfaction is the individual subjective feeling in general well-being. The concept of life satisfaction is related to happiness and well-being. According to Hall (2021), life satisfaction refers to the evaluation of one's life based on personal standards or expectations, while another meaning of satisfaction relates to feelings of pleasure about something. Factors that can influence life satisfaction include work, economic status, gender, education, life experiences, religiosity, and self-esteem. Satisfaction is an affective element, with its assessment involving cognitive elements and being subjective, as each individual has their own criteria (Waskito et al., 2018). One way to evaluate a person's life satisfaction is by recognizing their subjective experiences with both positive and negative emotions.

Other factors that can affect life satisfaction are related to psychological factors, such as self-esteem (Szcześniak et al., 2021). Self-esteem is one of the essential needs in a person's life. Rahmawati and Muslikah (2021) stated that self-esteem involves a person's thoughts and feelings about themselves. Self-esteem can also be a predictor of life satisfaction (Arslan, 2019). Therefore, self-esteem has a strong relationship with a person's life satisfaction level. Self-esteem is one of the important indicators for psychological health and is related to human well-being. Self-esteem is defined as a positive or negative attitude toward oneself. Rosenberg (1965) explained that self-esteem has two aspects, which are self-competence and self-liking. Self-competence is the result of manipulation of the physical or social environment that has a relationship to realization and achievement of goals. Individuals who have high self-competence feel they have good abilities, are more effective, and feel satisfied with their abilities. Meanwhile, self-liking is an evaluation of a person's personality, the value of a person as a social object that is judged based on good and bad social standards that have been internalized. It refers to the social values that come from within, do a positive attitude to yourself, consider yourself valuable, and be able to do things like most people do.

In research conducted by Hawi and Samaha (2017), it was identified that self-esteem has a strong correlation with life satisfaction in students who have addiction to social media. Another study conducted by Lee et al. (2021) revealed that self-esteem had a correlation with life satisfaction in Japanese and Korean students. It suggests that self-esteem can help individuals have the ability to see how much life satisfaction they have. Furthermore, Gencer's research (2020) asserted that if the research subject (athlete) provides appreciation in themselves, the research subject is able to bring up positive perceptions related to his life. Thus, a person who feels happy with himself has positive expectations in his life.

In addition to self-esteem, positive experiences and negative experiences also have a significantly considerable influence (Yildirim, 2019). Telef (2016) explained that positive experiences and negative experiences affect the life satisfaction of Turkish teenagers. A person's positive experiences help increase satisfaction in the life they have, while negative experiences can decrease life satisfaction. Meanwhile, Busseri (2018) in his research stated that positive experiences and negative experiences of individuals can assess a person's well-being as well as life satisfaction. This opinion is also supported by research conducted by Balgiu (2021), which found that positive experiences, negative experiences, and life satisfaction are strongly related in students' lives. The study also explains that female students experience higher levels of negative emotions than male students, although overall, all participants reported being satisfied with their lives.

Furthermore, research by Novianti and Alfiasari (2017) found that life satisfaction in students is influenced by both internal and external factors. One internal factor is individual characteristics, which can be predicted by how a person assesses their self-worth (Barutçu Yıldırım & Demir, 2020). Therefore, when self-esteem is present, a sense of satisfaction with one's life emerges. On the other hand, external factors are reflected in life experiences, both positive and negative. A person who experiences positive events in life is more likely to demonstrate a high quality of life, while an increase in negative experiences correlates with a decline in life quality (Moussa et al., 2023). Several previous studies have not extensively discussed the relationship between

self-esteem, positive and negative experiences, and life satisfaction. Therefore, this study aims to explore whether there is a relationship between self-esteem, positive and negative experiences, and life satisfaction, particularly among university students.

Method

This quantitative correlational study aims to examine the relationship between four variables: self-esteem, positive experiences, and negative experiences as the dependent variables, and life satisfaction as the independent variable.

Sample or Population

Participants in this study included 112 students, consisting of 57 men and 55 women. The age range of the participants was 17 to 25 years, with a mean age of 19.7 years.

Data Measurement

The study used three research instruments: the Satisfaction with Life Scale, the scale of positive and negative experience, and the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale. The satisfaction-with-life scale (SWLS) variable was developed by Diener et al. (1985). The life satisfaction scale consists of 5 item statements. Some examples of items on a scale, which are "I am satisfied with my life" and "in many ways, my life is close to my ideal". The scale has 7 rating points, with a score of 1 is strongly disagreed and a score of 7 is strongly agreed.

The second scale employed the self-esteem scale, the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES) developed by Rosenberg (1965). The self-esteem scale consists of 10 statements. Half of the total items have a way of scoring in reverse (unfavorable). Some examples of items are "overall, I'm satisfied with myself" and items unfavorable such as "I definitely feel useless at times".

In this study, positive and negative experiences were identified using the Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE) developed by Diener and Diener (2009). SPANE is a 12-item questionnaire that includes six items for assessing positive feelings (SPANE-P) and six items for assessing negative feelings (SPANE-N). Positive Feelings (SPANE-P) have scores varying from 1 to 5. Moreover, there are negative feelings (SPANE-N) with scores varying from 1 to 5. Scores can vary from 6 (as low as possible) to 30 (highest negative feeling score).

Data Analysis

The research used a quantitative approach by testing variables and processing numerical data scores obtained from participants. The study used Spearman's correlation analysis method. This study used SPSS 21.0 software.

Result

Table 1. The category of life satisfaction, self-esteem, positive experience, and negative experience

Category	Life Satisfaction		Self Esteem		Positive Experience		Negative Experience	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Very Low	23	20.5	23	20.5	25	22.3	23	20.5
Low	22	19.6	24	21.4	34	30.4	35	31.3
Average	31	27.7	32	28.6	22	19.6	17	15.2
High	17	15.2	20	17.9	0	0	22	19.6
Very High	19	17.0	13	11.6	31	27.7	15	13.4
Total	112	100	112	100	112	100	112	100

Based on table 1, it is discovered that the most categories of participants related to life satisfaction are in the moderate category with a total of 31 participants and a percentage of 27.7%. Furthermore, the category of participants most related to self-esteem was in the moderate category with a total of 32 participants and a percentage of 28.6%. Positive experiences were in the low category with a total of 34 participants and a

percentage of 30.4%. Furthermore, in the category of participants most related to negative experiences were in the low category with a total of 35 participants and a percentage of 31.3%.

Table 2. The normality test of life satisfaction, self-esteem, positive experience, and negative experience

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]		
	Coefficient	df	Sig.
Life Satisfaction	.065	112	.200[*]
Self Esteem	.087	112	.038
Positive Experience	.133	112	.000
Negative Experience	.126	112	.000
*p>.05			

Based on table 2, it is discovered that that life satisfaction data is normally distributed. It is different with the distribution of self-esteem data, positive experiences and negative experiences which have data that are not normally distributed. Therefore, the hypothesis test used is by using a Spearman's correlation technique.

Table 3. The correlation between life satisfaction, self-esteem, positive experience, and negative experience

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Self Esteem	-			
2. Positive Experience	.297[**]	-		
3. Negative Experience	-.254[**]	.140	-	
4. Life Satisfaction	.493[**]	.389[**]	-.236[*]	-
**p<.01; *p<.05				

Table 3 shows the highest correlation score between self-esteem and life satisfaction with a correlation value of r = .493 (p < .01). Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. It means that there is a positive correlation between self-esteem and life satisfaction. Furthermore, the correlation of positive experiences and life satisfaction has a correlation value of r = .389 (p < .01) so that the hypothesis is accepted. It means there is a positive correlation between positive experiences and life satisfaction.

Meanwhile, on the correlation between negative experiences and life satisfaction with a correlation value of r = .236 (p < .05) so that the hypothesis is accepted. It means that there is a negative correlation between positive experiences and life satisfaction. Based on these results, it can be concluded that self-esteem, positive experiences, and negative experiences are significantly correlated with student life satisfaction.

Discussion

Based on the results of the analysis, it shows that the greatest correlation occurs between self-esteem and life satisfaction. The correlation categorization between self-esteem and life satisfaction is in a strong relationship. The results of this research are supported by other research conducted by Diener and Diener (2009) which involving more than 13.000 students from 31 countries presented that self-esteem was significantly correlated with life satisfaction. The study corroborates one of the results of this study that there is a significant relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction in students. Yildiz and Karadas (2017) explained that self-esteem can affect life satisfaction in students. Self-esteem is considered one of the factors in increasing life satisfaction. A person who has self-esteem can easily fulfill his needs in a social environment. Ease of meeting these needs causes individuals to feel satisfied with achievements in life.

Self-esteem is a belief in one's own abilities (Cai et al., 2015). If a person has felt confident in his ability, the situation will lead to satisfaction (Okwaraji et al., 2016). Self-esteem can be a strong predictor of increased life satisfaction. A person who has self-esteem is considered a person who is able to evaluate his abilities. It is explained in the study of Chen et al. (2016) that a person's evaluation of self-esteem is related to a positive or negative state of mental health that affects his outlook on life satisfaction.

In this study, positive experiences and negative experiences had a correlation to student life satisfaction. The results of this study are supported by research conducted by Yildirim (2019) which explained

that positive experiences have a positive correlation with life satisfaction, while negative experiences have a negative correlation with adult life satisfaction in Turkey. This condition explains that the higher the positive experience obtained, the higher the life satisfaction felt. Conversely, the higher the negative experience a person has, the lower his life satisfaction is.

Jovanović and Joshanloo's (2021) study discovered that positive and negative experiences possessed an effect on life satisfaction not significantly different between age groups. Although the study subjects were in different age ranges, the evaluation of life satisfaction that was possessed can be influenced by the many positive and negative experiences. The results are in accordance with a meta-analysis conducted by Busseri (2018) that the relationship between positive and negative experiences affects life satisfaction and can be generalized across age groups.

Lazić et al. (2019) explained in their study that negative experiences can affect a person's life satisfaction. A high number of negative experiences can reduce life satisfaction. Negative experiences that are significant in one's current life have a substantial impact on low life satisfaction today. Each individual obtains increased life satisfaction in a different way and the level of life satisfaction is different. Therefore, it is necessary to understand how each person in different ways can have life satisfaction despite different levels of satisfaction.

Someone who knows their self-worth tends to be more satisfied and successful in achieving their goals, while someone with low self-esteem is more likely to experience mental health problems (Orth & Robins, 2022). Additionally, individuals who have more positive experiences and emotions will feel more fulfilled (Kardas et al., 2019). Fewer negative experiences can lead to a more satisfying life. It is important for a person to realize that self-esteem, positive and negative experiences can increase how satisfied their current life is. When a person is aware of his or her worth, it can be a special strategy to reduce negative experiences and increase positive experiences so as to also increase life satisfaction in general.

Conclusion

The study aims to identify the correlation between self-esteem, positive experiences, negative experiences, and life satisfaction. The results displayed that self-esteem, positive experiences, and negative experiences correlated with life satisfaction in university students. The strongest correlation is observed between self-esteem and life satisfaction, showing a positive and strong relationship. Similarly, the relationship between positive experiences and life satisfaction is positive, with a strong correlation. Meanwhile, negative experiences show a negative and moderate correlation with life satisfaction.

Acknowledgment

Suggestions for future research include examining more deeply the factors that have a greater impact on self-esteem, positive and negative experiences, and student life satisfaction. Additionally, it is recommended that future studies include a larger number of participants. Further research could also explore how students respond to positive and negative experiences, as well as how they build positive self-esteem to achieve greater life satisfaction. It is hoped that future studies will explore the role of higher education as an institution where students can enrich their life experiences by providing various facilities and opportunities for activities, ultimately enhancing life satisfaction during their time as university students.

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